

## **CHALLENGE UNLIMITED, INC. PRESIDENT/CEO INDUCTED AS INAUGURAL MEMBER OF ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY ENTREPRENEUR ALUMNI HALL OF FAME**

**Alton, IL** -- Challenge Unlimited, Inc. President and CEO Tom Moehn will be honored in September as an inaugural inductee into the St. Louis University Entrepreneur Alumni Hall of Fame. Moehn, a 1965 graduate of SLU, will be inducted, along with four other individuals, as original members of the Hall during a ceremony at the university Sept. 29.

“The Hall of Fame will exist to recognize and celebrate the examples of graduates of SLU who have contributed to society and the economy through entrepreneurial leadership in corporate and independent ventures as well as in public, civic and social organizations,” said Jennifer Ehlen, Director of Advancement for the university’s School of Business. “It is my pleasure to congratulate Tom on his induction to the inaugural class of the Saint Louis University Entrepreneurial Alumni Hall of Fame.

“As we prepare to kick off the Smurfit-Stone Center for Entrepreneurship’s 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration with the Hall of Fame awards ceremony, it is our intent to promote how proud we are of the inaugural years’ inductees as much as possible. I know I can speak on behalf of the Entrepreneurship Center’s faculty, staff, Advisory Board and the Hall of Fame Selection Committee members when I say that it has been extremely difficult to narrow down the pool of candidates. This is just another testament to what we already knew – Saint Louis University alumni are unparalleled when it comes to entrepreneurship, leadership and a commitment to others.”

Moehn was chosen as the inaugural inductee from the service organizations category. Individuals inducted in this category have displayed the characteristics of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial leadership in firms identified as charitable, religious or not-for-profit, including non-government organizations.

“This award isn’t about me,” Moehn said. “This is a great opportunity for Challenge Unlimited, Inc. to be recognized for its accomplishments achieved through the work of many, many people through the years.”

As an inductee, Moehn is also eligible for the SLU Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

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Full nomination narrative:

For almost 50 years, Challenge Unlimited, Inc. has been successful in helping persons with disabilities become more independent. And for more than three decades, St. Louis University alumna Tom Moehn has been at the helm of the Alton-based nonprofit organization, providing opportunities for persons with disabilities which assist them to live, work and participate in their communities.

Moehn, who graduated from SLU in 1965 and received a Masters in Social Work from the University in 1967, began his tenure with the company in 1969. Struggling with the philosophy of institutionalized care, Moehn left the Alton Mental Health Center, where he was a Social Work Trainee, and joined Challenge Unlimited as Social Work Coordinator. He was quickly promoted to Director of Social Services, and by year's end, became the agency's Assistant Director. It was evident early on that the company with humble beginnings needed someone with visionary leadership and courage to lead it in meeting the opportunities of the future, and only four years later Moehn was named Executive Director. His current title is President/Chief Executive Officer.

"I remember that right away under Tom's leadership we adopted the philosophy of community-integration," Vice President of Sales and Marketing Steve Brenegan said. Brenegan, a 30-year veteran of the company himself, said Moehn changed both the face and philosophy of the organization forever with his dogged commitment to community integration and expanding opportunities for individuals with disabilities. "He was willing to attempt what others would not dare try," Brenegan said. "And more often than not, his efforts proved successful.

"Tom was one of the first leaders in the Human and Social Services industry in our state to understand the benefits and appropriateness of enriching the vocational opportunities of individuals with disabilities," Brenegan said. "Under Tom's leadership, our agency quickly advanced a strong initiative

towards moving individuals with disabilities out of the sheltered workshop environment whenever possible and placing them into the community for vocational opportunities.”

This “new” philosophy of community integration was rare among Community Rehabilitation Service Providers and was much different than the ideals upon which the organization was founded. Challenge Unlimited, Inc., formerly known as Specialized Services, Inc., was established in 1959 as an Illinois nonprofit corporation. The organization was established by parents of adult children with disabilities who were interested in receiving continuing services after high school. The original purpose was to establish, maintain and operate vocational evaluation and training programs, and a sheltered workshop, for individuals with mental, emotional or physical disabilities.

The Parent Group hired a staff person to conduct a needs assessment of the Madison County area and subsequently plan, develop and administer a vocational program which at that time was called a Sheltered Workshop. Services included work activities which were made up of subcontracts secured from local businesses, personal adjustment training, work adjustment training and social activities.

In August, 1960, Specialized Services, Inc. opened its doors to six developmentally disabled men and women and services were provided by two staff members. The agency was incorporated as a nonprofit organization and certified by the Department of Labor to pay persons with disabilities for work performed according to each person’s abilities under a Special Minimum Wage Certificate.

Specialized Services was initially funded through the generous contributions from parents, friends and local businesses and was quickly approved by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to receive State grants and funding for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services. Soon after, the Department of Mental Health also approved Specialized Services to receive a grant from that department and the agency was able to expand services to persons with mental, emotional and physical disabilities.

The agency grew rapidly to 50 participants and outgrew the small building located in Alton, Illinois. The initial building was purchased through local contributions and the generosity of the owner. A larger building was procured in Alton, and the agency was again able to increase the services which it provided and increase the number of persons served. Growing steadily under Moehn’s leadership, the

agency's Developmental Training Program which provides vocational training opportunities for individuals with severe and profound disabilities, has outgrown three other buildings in Alton, and expanded to facilities in Granite City and Swansea, Illinois. The DT Program alone now provides services to more than 350 individuals with disabilities.

While the DT Program continued to grow, Moehn still explored his conviction that individuals with disabilities could, and should be productive in the mainstream business community. Investigating opportunities with local businesses and government entities, the company landed its first outside service contract cleaning the Madison County Courthouse. Supervised crews of individuals with disabilities provided quality custodial services. News spread, and soon the company landed other outside contracts with National Steel, Co., Illinois and Missouri Departments of Transportation, General Services Administration in Springfield, Illinois and St. Louis.

Knowing that, when given the opportunity and proper supports, individuals with disabilities could perform competitive, quality services in a community setting, Moehn set his sites on better jobs and better pay for individuals with disabilities. In the early 1980s, he initiated a partnership with NISH (National Institute for the Severely Handicapped). Working with NISH, Challenge Unlimited was awarded its first government services contract at Scott Air Force Base. NISH contracts were appealing because individuals with disabilities received pay based on Federal mandated prevailing wages, competitive benefits, and were guaranteed to perform 75 percent of the direct labor.

Building on its initial success, Challenge Unlimited has parlayed the one NISH contract into a long and mutually successful relationship. The company now provides contract management and service labor to custodial, grounds maintenance, food service and recycling contracts at Scott Air Force Base. The Food Service program at the Nightingale Inn has been recognized as the best Air Mobility Command dining facility eight of the last 10 years, and has twice earned the John L. Hennessey Award for best Air Force Command dining facility in the world!

The visionary relationship with NISH has also led to the procurement of service contract work in Missouri and Wisconsin as hundreds of individuals with disabilities in the tri-state area are receiving

vocational training and fair wages. Not satisfied, Moehn is currently launching the company on a strategic growth plan into an 11-state region in the Midwest.

The State of Illinois took notice of the company's success in the late 1980s and at the State's request, Residential Services of Madison County was formed with a single group home in 1989. The State of Illinois requested that the agency take over a large, failing residential facility in Troy, Illinois. Consistent with his desire for community-integration, Moehn oversaw the downsizing of this facility and began building Intermediate Care Facilities for the Developmentally Disabled and Community-Integrated Living Arrangement housing to provide homes for approximately 100 residents.

Now known as Residential Options, Inc. the company consists of 12 residential facilities throughout the Metro East and provides housing for nearly 140 individuals with disabilities. Individuals engage in all privileges and responsibilities of a typical home including cooking, laundry, cleaning, gardening and pet care. All housing is community-based, encouraging residents to become active members of their neighborhoods. Each setting emphasizes a genuine home environment.

In 1995, Moehn guided the company into its first venture with an Affirmative Enterprise and Alpha Industries was formed. Working alongside non-disabled employees, individuals with disabilities and the disadvantaged were afforded opportunities with increased pay as well as self-confidence and self-esteem.

Today, Challenge Unlimited, Inc. and its affiliate companies, Alpha Industries and Residential Options, Inc., continue to promote the development of persons with all types of disabilities by providing them with educational opportunities, vocational training, community-integrated housing and employment.

“Our philosophy towards rehabilitation at Challenge Unlimited, Inc. is one of community-integration and creating opportunities for greater independence,” Moehn said. “We believe the value of independence is immeasurable and that every individual deserves the right to have their personal choice reflected in the life they lead. Personal choice is considered in every aspect of the programs and services we provide.”

Challenge Unlimited, Inc. has earned local, regional and national recognition for its progressive philosophy. The remarkable success of the company has been acknowledged by leaders in the state, region and local community through the awarding of numerous honors. The company also is one of the organizations to receive a three-year accreditation from CARF, a national Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission.

“This accreditation outcome represents the highest level of accreditation awarded by the Commission to organizations that demonstrate substantial fulfillment of the standards established by CARF and clearly indicates that present conditions represent an established pattern of total operations that is likely to be maintained and or improved in the foreseeable future,” said Dr. Donald Galvin, President and CEO of CARF.

In 2003, Challenge Unlimited, Inc. also earned the rare honor of receiving several exemplary mentions from CARF. Exemplary mentions are the CARF equivalent to national recognition.

Challenge Unlimited, Inc. is known throughout the country for its progressive strategy to be a leader in offering services, housing, vocational training and employment opportunities to persons with disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. The organization has grown to consist of approximately 1,100 people; about half are employees, the other half are individuals who have a disability and receive services. Challenge Unlimited, Inc. serves people with disabilities in a three-state area, with more than 40 community sites, four company-owned work sites, and 12 residential homes.

The organization’s philosophy is unique for a community rehabilitation program in that it strives to be as self-sufficient as possible. Under Moehn, the organization has grown to generate more than \$26 million in annual revenue, helping to boost the economy by providing vocational training and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and decreasing their dependence on government assistance.

With Moehn’s leadership, the organization enjoys successful corporate relationships with a large number of prominent businesses and state agencies in the region and supports community activities, civic organizations and area schools with a similar mission through partnerships and sponsorships.

Challenge Unlimited, Inc. continually works to enhance the image of the region by assisting persons with disabilities, increasing the expertise of its employees and educating the public.

Moehn and Challenge Unlimited, Inc. are committed to the inclusion of individuals with disabilities into mainstream society and to assisting these individuals in obtaining their optimal level of independence by promoting the development of persons with disabilities and by providing educational opportunities, community-integrated housing and employment. Individuals are therefore, encouraged to achieve and maintain social integration and advance their quality of life.

“We strive to have our mission statements and philosophy of inclusion be living, working standards for all,” Moehn said. “We accept the challenge of assisting persons with disabilities, increasing the expertise of our employees and educating the public.”

From its humble beginnings to multimillions in revenue, Moehn has kept the company focused on its mission of community-integration and independence for individuals with disabilities and has built Challenge Unlimited and its affiliates into nationally-renowned organizations respected by their peers for innovation and proactive philosophy.

Moehn holds membership in the following professional associations:

- National Association of Social Workers
- Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (current board member and past president)
- National Rehabilitation Association
- I-TRUST (board member)
- ICAN (board member)
- National Association of Rehabilitation Facilities
- American Numismatic Association
- Missouri Numismatic Association
- Central States St. Louis Numismatic Association